



HUNGRY FOR HOPE

Gathering At The Table

2026 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

HOLY TRINITY
LUTHERAN CHURCH

40 DAYS OF PREPARATION

2026 Lenten Devotional

Dear Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Community,

Lent is a season that anticipates the hope of spring. Lent means “lengthen,” and rejoices in the lengthening of daylight. It’s a season of spiritual discipline alongside a season of optimism, anticipation, and hope regarding the future.

Over these forty days, you are invited to an intentional focus on faith using these three practices:

Daily Devotional: In the pages to follow, you will find forty devotionals written by forty members and friends of Holy Trinity. Each person answered a question posed by the book, *Hungry for Hope, Letters to the Church from Young Adults*, by Augsburg Fortress. You’re encouraged to take up the practice of reading one devotion each day.

Lent Small Groups: At the end of this booklet, you’ll find discussion guides for the Lent Small Groups. If you’d like to join a Lent Small Group, visit www.holytrinityonline.org.

Worship Regularly: Lent begins on February 18 at 6 pm for Ash Wednesday worship, as we remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Weekly worship on Sundays at 9 am and Wednesdays at 6 pm will focus on five chapters from the book *Hungry for Hope, Letters to the Church from Young Adults*, as the framework for the Lent Sermon Series. All are welcome! Lent this year is an honest, hopeful, and transformative exploration of the pressing challenges and opportunities facing the church today. Through the Lent Devotional, Lent Small Groups, and worship, we will address critical topics and seek actionable insights to support church renewal.

Blessings, Pastor Kjell Ferris

Week One Devotionals

February 18 - 28

This week explores the importance of approaching life, and the life of the church with courageous curiosity. Rather than clinging to familiar ways or assumptions, the authors invite us to ask bold questions and embrace uncertainty as a doorway to hope. The church is called to listen deeply to Scripture, to one another, and to the world for signs of God's fresh movement in surprising places.

Bible Reading: John 11:1-44, Raising Lazarus

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them.” After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

Jesus the Resurrection and the Life

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

Jesus Weeps

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”



**Debbie
Church**
February 18

What gets in the way of your own courageous curiosity?

Have you ever felt that God isn't answering a prayer? Perhaps your prayer was answered, but God's response may not have any kind of resemblance to your prayer expectation. If you have this experience, you may want to consider this a test of faith by trying to "embrace uncertainty as a doorway to hope". Be open to unexpected signs of God's presence. Recognizing an unexpected sign of God's presence requires curiosity. Seek that message from others, in word, music, art, or literally anywhere you may be. Sometimes we have to push ourselves outside our comfort zone. Or, work hard to pursue whatever we want to achieve.

Author Lysa Terkeurst wrote, "Hope is the melody of the good that is to come. I believe that faith is dancing to that melody right now."

Lord, thank you for listening to my prayers. Just as You showed up and raised Lazarus from the dead, may I trust that You will show up and meet the needs in my life according to Your plan. Help me to trade discouragement for hope, and dance with You by my side. Amen.

What gets in the way of courageous curiosity in your faith community?

Have you ever heard “we’ve always done it this way”? This is the first thing that came to my mind when I read this. God is a courageously curious God and we are made in his image. I feel I’m naturally a curious individual however I tend to let fear get in the way. We all (don’t worry, I’m also pointing at myself) need to be authentic and share when there is something we don’t know. It’s ok to not have all the answers. It is ok to talk about what you are feeling and be vulnerable. As Jesus said in John 11:14, “Lazarus is dead. For your sake, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.” We need to actively seek out different perspectives/cultures, have a “come and see” curiosity and compassionate inquiry rather than staying in the bubble of familiarity.

Dear Lord, please be with us as we go through these uncertain times within our faith community. Help us to deepen our understanding rather than push away thoughts that are contrary to ways we are accustomed to thinking. As our Lord told Joshua: “Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” In Jesus’ name. Amen.



**Tara
Duering**
February 19



**Jon
Bergquist**
February 20

What experiences have built up courageous curiosity in your life or the life of your faith community?

As a young person, I always sought answers to what I thought were important questions. Questions about silly things like, “when did dinosaurs exist? “We know from fossil remains that they existed, but there is no timeline in the story of creation where their existence is acknowledged. So, why is that? Am I not being told the whole story about creation? Am I not getting the truth from the Bible?

The answer was there. I just wasn’t looking hard enough. In Genesis 1: 20-23 I found my answer. “God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let the birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.’ So, God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind.”

There was my answer, the great sea monsters, the early aquatic dinosaurs. So go ahead, be courageous in your curiosity, study the Bible. It’s OK to ask questions. God gives you the answer you seek, you just need to look.

God, open my eyes and open my mind so that I might see all that is before me. Through courageous curiosity, I sometimes challenge your word, not to deny it, but to more deeply understand the wonders of your creation. Amen.

What kind of faith community embodies the gift of courageous curiosity that God gives us?

When I first encountered the phrase courageous curiosity, I struggled with it. It sounded odd to me. How can we be both courageous and curious at the same time?

The story of Lazarus helped me think about this. I found myself reaching for older language faith, trust, obedience, and uncertainty. When Jesus says, “Take away the stone,” it is a strange and risky request that is full of uncertainty. Obeying Jesus at that moment takes faith. For some, that obedience may feel heavy and fearful; for others, it may begin to open into anticipation what is Jesus about to do? The difference seems tied to the strength of their faith and their trust in Jesus.

Faith changes how we perceive uncertainty. It changes fear that closes us down into trust that opens us up. I believe this is what is meant by courageous curiosity.

Now I can answer the question: I think a faith community embodies the gift of courageous curiosity by becoming a place where uncertainty is interpreted through FAITH rather than fear.

Dear God, help our faith community to see and accept your gift of faith so that we can live in courageous curiosity instead of fear. Amen.



**Luke
Friendshuh**
February 21



**Craig
Horejsi**
February 22

What next steps do you want to take to cultivate courageous curiosity in your own life and relationships?

One thing that I find so amazing about the Raising Lazarus story in John 11 is what to me seems like a calm and confident tone taken by Jesus, even though he is disturbed by Mary's weeping over her brother's death and when approaching the tomb of Lazarus. As I think about how I can embrace courageous curiosity in my own life and relationships, I want to look to this example that Jesus provides; being calm and composed even in an emotionally trying situation.

I often find myself falling into what the book, *Hungry for Hope*, describes as "the killers of courageous curiosity" including the feelings of "we can't do that", hesitancy, and even hostility towards ideas I don't agree with, or more often haven't taken the time to

learn more about. I believe that by listening to the ideas of others, asking questions to build understanding rather than criticism, and managing my emotions, I can increase my ability to cultivate courageous curiosity in my own life.

Gracious Jesus, Teach us to trust your steady presence when emotions run high. Free us from the voices that say, "we can't," and from hostility toward what we do not yet understand. Give us the courage to listen deeply, and to ask questions that build understanding rather than judgment. Cultivate in us a courageous curiosity that reflects your love and brings life to our relationships. Amen.

What question is God inviting you to sit with?

What will you do to serve those in and around your community?

As my faith deepens, I've come to understand that giving to others is where I feel most alive. Serving fills my soul and grounds me in purpose. When I look at our community, locally and beyond, I dream of ways Holy Trinity can expand its impact through broader service, community partnerships, and support for those in need. A recent devotion reminded me, "I am with you and for you. You face nothing alone – nothing!" With that assurance, I feel called to serve boldly, trusting that God is with us in all we do.

Dear God, thank you for the many people you have led to Holy Trinity to hear your word and be filled with your spirit. Guide us to boldly serve our community, leading with love and following your steps. Amen.



**Lindsey
Cornell**
February 23



Kiersten Dahl-Shetka

February 24

Where in your life are you tempted to settle for the first answer instead of seeking deeper understanding?

Life can feel overwhelming—family, health, work, faith, and the world around us. When possible, I sometimes choose the quicker, easier path. Quick answers often work, and many of us were taught not to “reinvent the wheel.” Yet a life built only on speed and efficiency can leave us busy but empty—what Ecclesiastes calls “chasing after the wind.”

In John 10:10, Jesus offers another way: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Abundant life invites us to slow down rather than settle for the first answer, especially when reading Scripture. If the Bible feels confusing or uninteresting, the invitation is not to quit, but to linger.

Scholars remind us that Scripture is God’s good gift meant to be read carefully, questioned honestly, and revisited throughout our lives. A faithful reader may encounter a passage one hundred times and still discover

something new on the next reading. As our life experiences change, the same words deepen in meaning, like seeing through new lenses.

We can engage Scripture in many simple ways: reading slowly, praying, meditating on it, journaling, drawing, wrestling with it, or sharing reflections with others. However, when we return to God’s Word, the promise is growth, blessing, and a relationship with the One who gives life.

Dear Lord, help us slow down, read again, build relationships, and gain a deep understanding as we feel the abundant blessings of Your Scriptures. “Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things from your Torah/teaching” (Ps. 119:18). Please, God, even on my hundred-and-first time of reading. Amen.

What might it look like to approach your fear with curiosity instead of retreat?

We have a lot of fears in middle school - a new school, new schedules, new teachers, more school work, new sports (and trying to play them well), new musical activities, and lots of friendship changes. These fears can hold us back because we think of the worst things that can happen, and we let that control us. Instead, we could push forward and think of all the positive things that could happen.

We might learn something new, enjoy the physical activity and competition in sports, improve our musical skills, find a new passion, make new friends, and understand others' experiences, discovering what we can become.

When we are afraid, we ask Jesus to walk with us, to strengthen us, and to comfort us.

Lord, we thank you for the many opportunities available to us. We ask for curiosity and bravery so that we aren't held back by our fears or our insecurities. In your son's name we pray. Amen.



**6th Grade
Group 1**

Annie, Brayden,
Carson, Collin,
Evelyna, Hadley,
Jace, Maddie,
and Peyton

February 25



8th Grade Group 2

Abby, Grayden,
Lizzie, Lyla, Max,
Violet, William, Summer
February 26

In what relationships or settings do you need to listen more and speak less?

- At school, we learn more when our teachers teach and we listen. Listen to learn.
- We learn how to succeed at activities when our coaches coach and we listen. Listen to learn.
- At home, we learn what family means when our parents parent and we listen. Listen to learn.
- We learn about God's love at church when our preachers preach and we listen. Listen to learn.

Quick Listen to Learn Tips:

- Learn to be comfortable with silence, bringing peace and time to think.
 - Prioritize others' perspectives. Treat conversations as opportunities to learn rather than to perform or fix.
-
- Ask fewer, better questions:
 - * Replace "Why did you do that?" with "Tell me more about what led you to that."
 - * Use open prompts: "What happened next?" "How did that feel?" "What's you're thinking now?"
 - * Replace statements with reflections.
 - Use explicit listening signals: Nods, affirmations ("I see."), and natural prompts ("Mmm," "Go on.").

Dear God, you gave us two ears and one mouth. Let us learn how to speak less and listen more so that we use every opportunity to hear your Word. Amen.

How does the Raising Lazarus Bible story invite us to “come and see” rather than assume we already know the answer?

This story has many examples of those who think they know the outcome that the world has in store for them. The disciples wrongly believe that Jesus will die if he returns to the area around Jerusalem. Mary wrongly believes that Jesus is referring to the Last Day when he says Lazarus will return. The Jews who follow Martha believe that nothing awaits her at the tomb but grief. And Martha herself believes that the removal of the stone will reveal nothing but death and rot.

And I think there is one more example, not for the people in the story, but for us. Those of us who grew up on the classic beginners bible probably think we know the end of the story. Jesus will restore life to Lazarus, then embrace him with a smile. But even we have a surprise waiting for us. Jesus, the son of God himself, weeps. He grieves for his friend, and for the loss and pain the others are feeling. Even though he knows his Father’s plans. Even though he knows the end of the story. He still weeps.

This last surprise really hammers the lesson home. We should never give up our sense of curiosity. The mysteries and powers of God go well beyond our understanding, and our faith must be such that we are still curious and eager to see what God has in store.

Dear Lord, We pray for the humility to accept that your mysteries surround us, and that our knowledge of your world can never be perfect. We also pray that you would bless us with a sense of wonder and curiosity, so we might investigate your wonders and better appreciate your blessings in our lives. Thank you for the world you’ve given us, and the blessing you’ve poured out into our lives, seen and unseen. In your name we pray. Amen.



**Phillip
Knutson**
February 27



**Sharon
Steinhoff Smith**
February 28

How is Jesus calling you to be curious about God's activity in your community or world?

We are called to act with justice

We are called to love tenderly

We are called to serve one another

To walk humbly with God

These are lines from one of my favorite hymns (*We Are Called*, ELW #720). Act, love, serve, walk. Each verb is simple, but none is passive. They begin with curiosity and invite intention. They call us to help others, but also to reorient our own hearts.

This year in Minnesota, we've seen some of the worst of human behavior, and also some of the best. People have stepped forward with courage and compassion. We've seen the hands of Jesus in those defending, protecting, and serving their neighbors, and the face of God in those we might have once overlooked.

God calls us to move with intention: to let courage rise within us, to step into honest conversations, and to serve others with purpose. These actions reshape us and our communities, revealing God's grace already stirring.

God of justice and mercy, turn our hearts toward your work. Make us brave in action, gentle in love, joyful in service, and humble in our walk with you. Open our eyes to your image in every neighbor. Let small moments of grace take root in us and become healing for our community. Amen.

Hopeful Notes

Week Two Devotionals


March 1 - 7

This week draws attention to grief and lament as central experiences for individuals and communities. Rather than sidestepping sorrow, the authors call the church to embody lament together — to create space where grief can be expressed, shared, and transformed in the presence of others. Healing begins where lament is welcomed.

Bible Reading: John 13:1-17, Jesus Washes Feet

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his



outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.



**Brian
Gieseke**
March 1

What comes to mind when you consider how your church community has typically navigated grief?

What comes to mind is the strength/resilience of the Holy Trinity Community and true care/concern we have for one another. Sure, we all have doubts and there are bumps in the road, but we always come together and seek ways to help one another. Last spring, people would ask if I was concerned about the Hildings departure. We were grieving as a congregation. I would say, “I’m not concerned. The rest of us are still here.” Last year, when the young man went missing, now, given current events, we immediately have people asking what they can do and finding solutions for ways to help. No matter the cause of grief, there is someone within our walls that will notice pain and offer to help. As one who admittedly hesitates to share, Holy Trinity is one of the few places I feel comfortable wearing my heart on my sleeve and it’s thanks to all of you.

Dear God, help us to share our grief, be accepting of help, and be willing to offer it in return. Amen.

What do you think is at risk for church communities that do not pause to create rituals around grief?

Church communities that do not create rituals around grief risk losing their ability to hold people together when life becomes overwhelming. When the church continues to sing only “happy songs” in the midst of deep loss, it fails to mirror the honesty of Scripture and the compassion of Christ. Grief is not something we can think our way through; it must be carried in community. We need others to see us, to sit with us, to weep with us, and to remind us that we are not alone. When the church makes space for grief, it embodies Christ’s presence—tender, attentive, and faithful. Without such practices, the body of Christ can fracture under the weight of unspoken sorrow.

God of mercy, teach us to hold one another in grief and love. Make us a community where sorrow is named, tears are welcomed, and hope is gently nurtured through your presence. Amen.



**Pastor
Kjell Ferris**
March 2



Pastor Phil Formo

March 3

Reflect on what spaces you have felt safe to grieve in the presence of others. What was it about those spaces that led you to feel safe to grieve?

In my life, in what space have I felt comfortable to grieve and express my lament?

Besides the sad yet expected death of parents, there have been three deaths that especially stung. My girlfriend at age 23, my brother at age 37, and my sister at the age of 57.

While flying to Seattle for my girlfriend's funeral, I knew at least three faith communities were praying for me. The presence of their prayers and the comfort of their actions held me in faith.

While on seminary internship, my brother died flying for the Navy. With a warm cake, Dorothy sat at our parsonage table offering comfort and a holy presence. In Virginia Beach, trained Navy personnel offered every kindness possible.

Finally, at my sister's death, it was family that gathered from quite a distance. Their presence was indeed a holy presence.

Thanks be to God for three communities of faith, the US Navy and family, to offer eternal comfort. Amen.

What sorrow or loss have you been holding inside that longs for expression?

If I were to do a sermon now, the headline would be “Everyone needs to knock it off.” We need to de-escalate the infighting amongst ourselves. This is not what loving our neighbor looks like. I don’t believe, however, that humanity is capable of reaching ‘on earth as it is in heaven’ without divine intervention. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit do we stand a chance in reconciling our differences and heading in the right direction as a community, state, country, and world. Jesus came to earth to teach us how to put ourselves last and be servants of all. Satan is having a field day in our current state, just as he put betrayal into Judas’s heart. In my opinion, preaching the gospel and walking in faith as individuals are what we can do. God will do the rest.

Heavenly Father, give us the patience to put our differences aside and love our neighbors the way Jesus taught us. Allow us to see clearly how we best do this in our own lives. Amen.



**Nate
Kahnke**
March 4



Toby Thietje

March 5

Who accompanies you in your grief, and where do you long for more support?

After resigning from my teaching position, I felt a huge gap in my chest that comes when a calling ends and the future feels unclear. I didn't just leave a job, I grieved a version of myself I thought would last longer. In that grief, I have not been alone. Friends and family have sat with me. Church staff and council president Lindsey Cornell have reminded me I still belong. Pam O'Brien has helped me imagine a life beyond the boundaries I once knew. Pastor Ben has spoken words of hope that only he can say when my own thoughts have gotten dark.

And still, I long for more support, from God, from community, from a clearer sense of what comes next. This Lent, I am hungry not for answers, but for hope and the quiet assurance that even in loss, God walks with me, feeding me grace one step at a time.

*God, sit with me in my grief. Feed me hope when I feel empty.
Amen.*

Where have you sensed God's presence most near during difficult moments?

In the upper room, Jesus knelt low,
With dusty feet and love to show.
When life feels hard—like fights with friends,
A lost big game, or days that bend
At school with stress, or words that sting
God feels closest in serving things.
In arguments, when pride feels loud,
He meets us humble, not in crowds.
On sidelines, benches, hospital halls,
At kitchen tables, office calls
He's near when we choose love and care,
When we forgive, when we are fair.
God is closest when we kneel,
And love becomes something real.

*Jesus, Thank You for showing us what real love looks like.
Help me be humble and willing to serve others, even when
it's not easy. Give me eyes to see people who need help and
a heart that wants to follow Your example. Amen.*



**6th Grade
Group 2**

**Bennett, Cy, Joe,
Kinsley, Laney, Lennon,
Paxton, Penny**

March 6



Maggie Arko
March 7

How does lament open our hearts to deeper hope?

Maybe the question these days is how can we hope without lament. I learned that “mourning” is the social, psychological, and cultural process of responding to loss, while “lament” is an explicit expression of grief.

We know we must mourn a death in order to move on, and we have very definite rituals to do that. We also lament: wail, cry, argue, laugh, cling, or turn away, and these behaviors are accepted as necessary. When “Jesus wept” it was lament. In the church, we celebrate blessings often, but lamenting is harder. Maybe we feel we should thank God for the good, but take care of the pain ourselves. And yet, Jesus didn’t.

Dr. Benjamin R. Cremer writes that lament is not a sign of weakness but an expression of grief and sorrow. It is spiritual honesty that names what is wrong and will not let us look away or be falsely optimistic. It isn’t despair, but hope that refuses to die. It is not wrong to call to our God in the midst of suffering. Lament cries for God and insists on hope even when hope is hard to see. I believe we need lament to see hope.

In John 11, Jesus knew Lazarus was dead when he met Martha, but it was after he met Mary and all those gathered with her weeping that He wept and then he moved to action. Maybe this means it is good for us to spend time in lament together before the Lord.

Lord, it feels like our world is falling apart. There is great change and much anger and fear. It feels like you have forgotten us. You promised your love. Help us to see that love today and to radiate it to everyone around us. Help us to know how we can help. Amen.

Hopeful Notes

Week Three Devotionals

March 8 - 14

This week looks honestly at mental health including trauma, anxiety, stress, and the unmet emotional needs within our congregations and society. The church is called not just to preach care, but to embody health and wholeness: creating practices and communities that attend to spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being.

Bible Reading: John 18:12-27, Peter's Denial

Jesus before the High Priest

So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

Peter Denies Jesus

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. The woman said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered, “I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.” When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, “Is that how you answer the high priest?” Jesus answered, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?” Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Peter Denies Jesus Again

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, “You are not also one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.



**Christa
Smith**
March 8

What are some curiosities you want to explore more deeply around trauma, anxiety, and our call to mental health?

In a recent conversation, a neighbor shared her worries of how she might struggle to face her fears when she hopes to be courageous. In John 18:12-27, Peter's denial of Jesus is shaped by fear and self-preservation, but not a lack of love. In his anxiety, Peter seeks safety, and Jesus does not reject him for it. Instead, Jesus later restores him with tenderness. This passage reminds us of how fear lives in the body and how Christ meets us there - not with shame, but with grace. Knowing we can honor our instincts to survive while allowing Jesus to lead us back into safety, truth, and relationship is invaluable. We could be so kind as to give ourselves the same grace. Healing, then, becomes less about forcing peace within and more about trusting His presence to steady us.

Dear Jesus, meet us in our fear. Teach our bodies and hearts that we are safe with you. Amen.

What is your relationship with your mental health?

Maintaining our mental health is as crucial for our well-being as maintaining our physical health. When we struggle with our mental health through moments of anxiety, depression, burnout, and grief, we are not failing - we are having human experiences.

When Peter denied Jesus, his failure didn't come from indifference towards Jesus, it came from a human's natural response to fear and stress. We try to protect ourselves in times of trial and look for ways of healing. Healing can look like therapy, medication, rest, boundaries, or asking for help. The one true healer is there for us always. We are not broken beyond repair for God and when we are feeling broken he comes close. He does not want us to hide from him in times of struggles. Those are the times we should seek him the most.

God, you see my thoughts, my fears and the parts of me I try to hide. Give me the courage to seek healing and not be ashamed of my struggles. Thank you for being the joy in my life. Amen.



**Hannah
Weiers**
March 9



Gina Fadden

March 10

In what ways has the Christian church hindered or supported your deepest longings and mental wellness?

The church is not an abstract institution; it is people living their lives together. And because of that, we both harm and help one another.

The Christian church has supported my deepest longings when it has offered true community, compassion, and space to be honest. When I have been able to show up as I am, not polished, not certain, not strong and still be welcomed, something in me has healed. Shared meals, quiet prayers, handwritten notes, and simple presence have mattered more than perfect theology.

At times, the church has hindered mental wellness when encouragement was offered without awareness of the pain someone

was carrying. I know I have urged involvement or faithfulness when someone may have been overwhelmed or grieving. What was meant as invitation may have landed as pressure. I try to remember that we are all wounded people in search of healing. Some of us have access to tools, therapy, community, and safety that support that healing. Others are denied those resources by systems and circumstances beyond their control.

The church is called to be a place where healing is possible — not another source of harm.

Healing God, hold us in your gentle mercy. Forgive the ways we have wounded one another, and teach us to speak good news with tenderness. Make your church a place of safety, rest, and repair, so that all your beloved people may find wholeness in you. Amen.

How can the church become a sanctuary of healing for mental health?

Peter denied Jesus three times. A few things come to mind when I read that.

We have more time than money. Consider spending time with someone you only see in passing. Time spent together may be just what you both need.

Listen to learn and learn to listen. Remember to truly listen to what's being said. Rephrase what you have heard back to the speaker. Sometimes, that is all someone needs. To be heard.

Finally, don't judge a book by its cover. We can not understand how beautiful the book is if we won't get past the cover.

By judging and not truly hearing what's being said, and denying them, we become like Peter. We may not have heard the true message or have a clear understanding of the person. Do not let fear and lack of knowledge hold you back from getting to know someone.

Dear Lord, help me to truly listen to others without judgment. Help me to understand them as you do. Amen.



**Teresa
Patterson**
March 11



8th Grade Group 1

Adley, Alexander, Ava,
Elliana, Emma, Finley,
Finnegan, Morgan

March 12

Where do you experience anxiety or stress most acutely? What practices help you feel grounded in God's presence?

We experience stress and anxiety mostly at school. This is due to grades, homework, sports, and social media. We experience stress before going on the court or on the field. We also experience stress from home life if it is busy or crazy around the house. Practices that help us feel grounded in God's presence are going to church, praying, worshipping, attending confirmation class, and doing things that we love. We can also surround ourselves with other believers.

Dear Lord, We ask you to be with us when we have stress or anxiety, to help us stay confident before our games, tests and other big events. We pray that you keep us grounded in your love. Help us seek you and stay positive. Amen.

How does John portray Jesus as a healer and companion in suffering?

November 7, 2020, the day of my Grandma Sullivan's funeral was a difficult day. I was saying goodbye to a woman that meant the world to me. A true light in my life, from the always stocked candy drawer to "order whatever you want" liberties from the Avon catalog to the proudest Great-Grandma to my babies.

And then to make matters worse, we were in the thick of the COVID pandemic. My husband and kids had it, so I sat by myself in a church pew. I felt so alone. Looking around the church, everyone had someone next to them. A tender arm wrapped around their shoulders, a hand being held, a comforting person sitting by their side and I sat by myself. As those feelings took root, I felt selfish and wrong for feeling sorry for myself. I should be focused on the fact that we were saying goodbye to my Grandma. But could there have been a worse time to be alone than at your Grandma's funeral? Ugh!

And then I realized, I wasn't alone. I was in church. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." (John 14:18). I closed my eyes and pictured Jesus sitting next to me. Putting his arm around me and reminding me that in a world filled with hardship, he promises to bring us peace.

Lord, we ask that you help us to remember we are never alone. Thank you for always sitting with us when we need your comfort and peace. Amen.



Cassie Olson
March 13



7th Grade Group 1

Aubrey, Aydan, Clara,
Cora, Kylee, Lydia,
Madden, Max

March 14

Who in your life needs compassion and listening right now? What is one step you can take today to nurture wholeness in yourself or others?

In John 18:12-27, Peter said he didn't know Jesus because he was scared. Sometimes we feel anxiety, stress, or fear in different situations with denial and shame. God didn't expect Peter to be perfect, and he doesn't expect us to be either. For example, when our team got down about losing a hockey game, our players lifted each other up and worked together. When we fail a test at school, we work through it by retaking it or studying harder. We can listen and pray with a friend that may be struggling or having a hard day.

Many people in our lives need to feel love and compassion. Our family, friends, and neighbors want to feel listened to and be treated with kindness. This all plays into how a person's mental health is from day to day. We can spread God's love through kindness and compassion from one generation to the next.

Dear God, help us care for our mental health and for others who are struggling. Give us courage to listen, kindness to share, and peace when we feel anxious. Amen.

Hopeful Notes

Week Four Devotionals


March 15 - 21

Community — genuine, attentive, loving community — is at the heart of this week. Explore how the church can become a place where people truly belong, not just gather. We are called to create spaces where all are welcomed at the table, differences are honored, and relationships are shaped by compassion and justice.

Bible Reading: John 18:28-40, Jesus and Pilate

Jesus before Pilate

Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring



against this man?" They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

Jesus Sentenced to Death

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" They shouted in reply, "Not this man but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a rebel.



Karen Taylor

March 15

In your own experience, what are the barriers to authentic community?

Social media memes are the modern day version of newspaper cartoons. Some are irresistibly cute pets and some are divisive political headlines. The visual assault of social media has shrunk the world for two decades, and today, people are bombarded with images and information created by artificial intelligence (AI). While the modern marvel of online social media communities and time-saving AI can be helpful for small business owners and part-time Communication Managers, they eliminate the need for real, face to face, human interaction.

Authentic community must be rooted in real relationships with real people. It might be my Gen X mindset, but the term “friend” has been diluted by social media. I have hundreds of Facebook “friends,” but most of them are classmates, former co-workers, and acquaintances. Other social media platforms have “followers,” indicating no relationship at all, just a mere interest in the other person. Alexa might be humorously helpful during my pre-worship announcements, but she isn’t going to drive me to the hospital at 3 am in an emergency.

Dear Lord, thank you for blessing my relationships with family, friends, and co-workers. Help me to continue to make authentic connections by following your teachings. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Why does community, grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, still matter today?

In John 18, Jesus stands alone before Pilate, misunderstood, accused, and yet unwavering in truth. Pilate asks, “What is truth?” while the crowd outside chooses fear and convenience over relationships. This moment reveals a painful reality: when community fractures, truth and compassion are often the first casualties.

Jesus’ life and ministry consistently pointed toward a different way. He gathered people at tables, crossed boundaries, and formed community rooted not in power or uniformity, but in love. Even here, in isolation, Jesus embodies the truth that genuine community matters, it is where dignity is upheld and justice takes shape.

In today’s world, many gather without truly belonging. The church is called to be more than a crowd; it is meant to be a place of deep listening, shared burdens, and courageous love. When we create space for one another, we reflect Christ, who never abandoned community, even when it abandoned Him.

God of truth and love, Teach us to build communities shaped by compassion, courage, and grace. Help us to listen with open hearts and to see one another as You see us, worthy, beloved, and welcomed. May our churches reflect Your grace, and may our lives make room at the table for others, just as Christ has made room for us. Amen.



**Samantha
Miller**

March 16



7th Grade Group 2

Ben, Charlie, Evelyn,
Faith, Josephine,
Libby, Lily, Piper
March 17

How do you experience “belonging” in your community of faith?

We feel like we belong at Holy Trinity!

When we walk into Holy Trinity, we always experience warm, smiling faces that tell us we are welcome. We experience kindness from others and know that differences are honored and not put down. When we come to Holy Trinity, we do not have to be fancy; we just have to be ourselves. Even eating food together before Wednesday night worship makes us feel more at home.

We feel like we belong when people include the youth. Like when we were asked to give our opinion about what we need in a new pastor or when we help serve on the worship team on Wednesdays.

At Holy Trinity, we are challenged to learn things from the Gospel and apply them to our daily lives, like learning to help each other experience belonging.

Dear Jesus, Thank you for letting us experience belonging at Holy Trinity. Help us to include others so they can feel like they belong. Amen.

Where have you felt excluded or unseen? How have Christian communities contributed to those feelings?

When I moved to Minnesota in May of 2013, it was hard to feel like I belonged anywhere outside of my home area of Colorado. I was fresh out of school and just starting my career, which put me in a place where I didn't really know where I fit. One of the biggest blessings during that time was my grandparents, Jim and Geri Sandin. They brought me to Holy Trinity, and I quickly noticed how welcoming the community was. Even though I wasn't a member yet, I was invited to help with worship by running the slides and to join Lenten small groups. Instead of feeling left out, I felt included and noticed. That experience showed me how much it matters when churches make space for everyone.

Lord, help us notice those who fell unseen and give us hearts that welcome others. Amen.



**Brady
Bouffleur**
March 18



Agape

Elioria, Evan,
Parker, Rylan

March 19

What does it mean to you for the church to be a table where everyone is welcome? What qualities in Christian communities make this possible?

At Holy Trinity, ALL ARE WELCOME. Embodying the teachings of Jesus requires radical hospitality. As a church, we need not just welcome the stranger but find them and invite them in. As individuals, we need to embrace being uncomfortable. We need to come together to create safe spaces. This might mean respectfully disagreeing with someone in an effort to not exclude them. But it is important to seek out and develop intentional relational connections while acknowledging that our own unique differences should be recognized, honored, and celebrated.

In his bible verse, Jesus tells us that what is valued and kingly on Earth is not what is important in the kingdom of Heaven, but instead we should all be servants of those on the margins. Everyone who is of the truth hears His voice.

Dear God, please help us look within our hearts to find spaces for others and to connect with those who are different from us. Amen.

How does the Gospel of John depict the community around Jesus especially at meals and in relationships?

The Gospel of John is filled with imagery of Jesus teaching his disciples and other believers that connection to Him also connects them to one another and to God, through Him. Social boundaries race or a traditionally shunned group like the Samaritans are challenged by Jesus as He teaches that we are all one under God.

He showed the people of the time and people today what God is like. When he said I am the vine, you are the branches, he described that connection well. The Last Supper, in which he instructed his disciples to be ever connected to Him by ceremoniously drinking his blood and eating his body, is celebrated at Holy Trinity twice a month, and in most Christian today. Holy Trinity always declares “All are welcome” at Communion, which I love and I feel it represents Christ’s intentions at the Last Supper long ago a profound and brilliant example of His connection and unity.

Jesus didn’t work alone he recruited a group of disciples who traveled with him and witnessed His miracles. He showed people what God is like in the feeding of the 5,000, turning water into wine in Cana, and at the Last Supper, and even after his resurrection when He fed the disciples fish and bread on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus, please help us learn to love through You, by loving each and every one of God’s human children as well as all living things on this Earth. Help us to create loving communities and strive to be connected to God through Him. Amen.



Nancy Besse

March 20



**Melissa
Horejsi**
March 21

What steps could make your small group or congregation more welcoming? How does love transform a community into a place of hope?

How to transform a community into a place of hope? Radical welcome. Authentic interactions. Shared experiences and stories. Offering a place that is safe and where ALL feel like they are home when they walk through the doors. I feel truly loved and welcomed at Holy Trinity. Some reasons why:

- **Music and Worship!** I like to sit close to the band so I can see their side-eyes at each other and I can gush over the young ones dipping their toes into service. The sermons are pretty awesome and leave me thinking every week. I like finding ways it can connect to my week outside of worship and how I can be a better person because of it.
- **Conversations:** with old or young, deep and intense or light hearted and funny, to help problem solve or just to listen. I love hearing about my people, my church family.

• **Shared meals:** fancy brunches with french toast, Dominoes night, chef's choice, soup suppers, and the wonderful people who put the food in front of me. Donna remembers I like cinnamon rolls with my chili (yes, it is a thing!) and Dirk asks me if I want extra beans in my chili (I do not enjoy beans). Knowing I can come just as I am and enjoy a meal is a great way to connect with others (and get to know the regulars).

God of All, help us realize the joys of an authentic and loving community where everyone learns of your love for all, no exceptions. Find ways to challenge us to be more inclusive and find opportunities of radical welcome. Thank you for always providing what we need when we need it, even if we don't understand... yet. Amen.

Hopeful Notes


Week Five Devotionals

March 22 - 29

This week moves the church beyond its walls. It is a call to engage in the life of the world in justice, neighborly compassion, and faithful action. The church is called to trust and accompany the broader world in the work God is already doing.

Bible Reading: John 19:1-16a, Jesus Condemned

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and w him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him!



Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.”

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, “Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and power to crucify you?” Jesus answered him, “You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against Caesar.”

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge’s bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover, and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, “Here is your King!” They cried out, “Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.



Sunday Confirmation Group

**Adam, Brayden,
Eldon, Nick**

March 22

How have you experienced God in the community?

We experience God in our community by doing little things to help people who are having a bad day or can't do it themselves. This makes us think of Matthew 25:40, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me." When we come to church, we see our community coming together to help people outside of our church with things like the Christmas Sharing Tree, the Little Free Pantry, and remodeling the inside of the church, which makes it even more welcoming for things like the Community Thanksgiving Dinner. We should all remember to look for the little ways to help inside and outside the church so we can share God's love!

*Dear God, thank you for giving us gifts to help others.
Help us to share our gifts with others in need. Amen.*

How would you define the neighborhood in which your congregation is located?

Just outside the hustle and bustle of the metro area stands our little city of New Prague. It is a fairly traditional city taking great pride in its Czech roots. We have great schools, safe streets, and good values. But that doesn't mean we can't do more. As we enter this fifth week of the Lenten season, in light of all our state has seen in the last few months, we are called to move beyond the comfort of our own walls and into the lives of our neighbors.

Lent is not only a season of internal reflection; it is a call for compassion for those around us. Dozinky is known as a "festival of the harvest." Much like this town celebrated Dozinky by gathering together and sharing their harvest with their neighbors, during this time we are invited to share our abundance with our neighbors - be it time, resources, or even a listening ear. Taking faithful action means looking at the person in the pew next to us or the family across the street regardless of their background, religious beliefs, or political affiliation and doing something good. This Lent, may we embody the spirit of Christ and the tradition of Dozinky and share what we have with those in need.

Dear God, we thank You for the gift of community. As we walk this path of reflection, fill our hearts with the selfless compassion of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us the eyes to see the needs of those around us and the hands ready to serve without hesitation. Teach us to love not just in thought, but in faithful action so every neighbor feels Your presence through our work. In Your holy name we pray, Amen.



**Cory
Magnuson**
March 23



Rita Sapp
March 24

**In what ways is Holy Trinity connected to the community?
Where do you see God calling Holy Trinity to move beyond its walls?**

Besides offering worship opportunities for fellowship and welcoming people of all ages and backgrounds, we have been active in bringing people together! Holy Trinity connects with the New Prague Community through social events, service projects, collaborative outreach projects, multi-generational programs, and by providing space and support for local groups and needs.

When I hear “move beyond its walls,” I think of some phrases:

- From ‘come to us’ to ‘we’ll come to you’ – God may be calling us to show up more visibly in everyday life. Schools, coffee shops, local service organizations, etc. Not to preach but to be known!
- From parishioners to neighbors – There are likely people who are

hungry for connection: young families stretched thin, seniors who feel forgotten, people carrying grief. God often sends the church toward the overlooked, not just the already-connected.

- From comfort to courage – God’s call includes a little discomfort. Letting go of ‘how we’ve always done it’ to make room for new life!
- From building-centered to Spirit-led. The Church isn’t the brick and mortar – it’s the baptized. God may be inviting Holy Trinity to see Sunday as the sending, not the finish line: “Go be Christ out there this week!”

God of the streets and the sanctuary, send us beyond our walls from comfort to courage, from building to blessing that we may be Christ to our neighbors, wherever you lead. Amen.

What issues in your community seem to be most urgent? What do people in your community care most about?

For 30 years, I was the “welcome lady” in New Prague and later in Lonsdale, Elko New Market, and with help, visiting over 4800 homes during that time. I will confidently say that each of the visits with families was very pleasant, and hearing their stories was so enjoyable. Here are a few common takeaways from my experience:

- These newcomers are anxious to meet their neighbors. I received a phone call after one of my visits from a young mom with sick children. She said she didn’t know anyone to call except the phone number that I had left. She asked me to drive her to a pharmacy to get medication for her children. You don’t have to do much, but just connect.
- Parents with young children always asked about local babysitters. I never gave names but suggested they meet their neighbors for advice. Perhaps, Holy Trinity could offer babysitting classes here for our students and have our parishioners get to know them.
- As the years went by, I handed out fewer brochures from our local churches. In the last few years, I feel only about 1 in 10 people asked about local churches. How do we WELCOME, WORSHIP, and RESPOND with all of our neighbors? How do we connect?

During my visits, I realized that it does not take long to understand that we are all connected.

Dear God, thank you for life’s experiences to connect us all. Amen.



Laurie Thorp
March 25



8th Grade Group 3

Ainsley, Brody,
Dylan, Hunter, Ingrid,
Jackson, Jude,
Leeland, Quinn
March 26

How does the world around you show signs of hope?

Easter arrives as winter loosens its grip and spring breathes new life into the world. Bare branches bud, frozen soil softens, and what once seemed lifeless begins to change. In the same way, Easter reminds us that it is always there. Through Jesus Christ's resurrection, God showed that even death does not finish it all. What seemed like an ending became a powerful beginning.

For students, this hope feels familiar. Long nights spent studying, moments of doubt, and the pressure of tests can be overwhelming. Yet with preparation, perseverance, and faith, efforts turn into confidence. Hope can fuel courage.

That same hope is shared through engagement with the Little Free Pantry. When families facing hardships receive food freely given, they are reminded that they are not forgotten.

Dear Jesus, Thank you for giving us hope through your death and resurrection. Help us to share this hope with others. Amen.

How does Jesus' life in John's Gospel move beyond boundaries and expectations?

In John's Gospel, Jesus is constantly moving beyond the boundaries and expectations of the world. In Chapter 11, in raising Lazarus, Jesus breaks down the boundary of death. "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.'" Later, in Chapter 13, he washes Peter's feet, and he shows us that, to be a leader, you must serve. "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.... Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them." Even when he is about to be sentenced to death in Chapter 19, he reveals to Pilate that a Roman governor is not truly in charge. "Jesus answered him, 'You would have no power over me unless it had been given to you from above....'"

In our world today, boundaries and expectations often keep us from living as God wants us to live. But Jesus calls us to think and act differently. He wants us to lead a life of service and to remember that God's love conquers all, even death.

Holy God, in this Lenten season, break down the boundaries we build around our hearts. Teach us to serve as Jesus served and to trust in the life that even death cannot contain. Amen.



Nick Meyer
March 27



Ann Studer
March 28

How can Christ's love shape your interactions outside church spaces?

In John 19:1–17, Jesus is mocked and beaten and is about to be crucified. It reminds me to have hope in the hard and heavy. We are each beacons of hope in the hard and heavy; in our families, at school or work, and in our communities.

Jesus carrying the cross was the greatest love story; He died so we could live, and He died so we could love like Him. Christ's love is patient, full of grace, forgiving, unconditional, present always, and forever. How can you share God's love with your family, your neighbors, the marginalized, the disabled, the vulnerable, immigrants, the suffering, and your enemies?

Shining His light and sharing His love in our communities and beyond, in big ways and small ways, and in easy ways and hard ways, gives hope in the hard and heavy. When the world feels hard and heavy, remember that God is very much at work in each of us and in the world. Where will you be a beacon of hope this week?

Heavenly Father, Your love is patient, full of grace, forgiving, unconditional, always present, and forever. Thank you for loving us, creating us in Your image, and choosing us to be a part of Your love story. Help us to share Your love to ALL PEOPLE across generations every single day by being beacons of hope in the ways that we serve, help, forgive, pray, love, and live. Amen.

What risks of faithfulness feel most alive to you right now?

My kids are in middle and high school. Recently, I sat them down for a conversation, I'm still struggling to understand myself. I told them that if they come across anyone being detained, they should walk the other way. Don't record. Don't witness. Don't engage. Turn around.

I've raised them to defend others and stand up for what they believe in. And yet, as a mom, I am scared for them. There is so much fear and anger surrounding these moments that people can lose their humanity, making it dangerous for everyone - even those on the periphery. Hearing hateful and thoughtless words from people in my own community makes mercy feel like a risk.

As I read John 19, I imagine Jesus standing in Pilate's headquarters, faithfully accepting humiliation and suffering. I imagine Pilate repeatedly naming Jesus' innocence, yet fearfully ordering his crucifixion anyway. Pilate knows what is right, but fear wins.

I watch my children take in what grows out of this pain, and I pray every day for pause for space where fear doesn't dictate our choices or our words. Strip away the politics and policies, and we are left with people. People who are afraid for their families. People who are praying every day that their lives aren't shattered by fear. Even here, I trust that God meets us with mercy.

Dear God, show us your mercy. Amen.



Nikki Sames

March 29

Hopeful Notes

Small Group Guides - WEEK ONE

February 22 - 28

Introductions: Welcome one another, and then share a moment when you were courageous.

Opening Prayer: God of life and resurrection, you call us from tombs of certainty and fear into new questions and new possibilities. Give us courage to be curious, to listen deeply to your Word, to one another, and to the world around us. As we gather, open our minds and hearts to where your Spirit is stirring new life among us. Amen.

Bible Reading: John 11:1-44, Raising Lazarus

Setting the Table: This week explores the importance of approaching life and the life of the church with courageous curiosity. Rather than clinging to familiar ways or assumptions, the authors invite us to ask bold questions and embrace uncertainty as a doorway to hope. The church is called to listen deeply to Scripture, to one another, and to the world for signs of God's fresh movement in surprising places.

Food for thought:

1. What gets in the way of courageous curiosity in your faith community?
2. What next steps would you like to propose for your faith community in implementing courageous curiosity?
3. What next steps do you want to take to cultivate courageous curiosity in your own life and relationships?
4. What might it look like to approach your fear with curiosity instead of retreat?
5. How is Jesus calling you to be curious about God's activity in your community or world?

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Small Group Guides - WEEK TWO

March 1 - 7

Introductions: Remind each other of your name, and share something about your hobbies.

Opening Prayer: Compassionate Christ, you kneel beside us in love and do not turn away from our sorrow. Hold us as we name our griefs and losses, and teach us to accompany one another with tenderness and honesty. Create among us a community where lament is welcomed and healing can begin. Amen.

Bible Reading: John 13:1-17, Jesus Washes Feet

Setting the Table: This week draws attention to grief and lament as central experiences for individuals and communities. Rather than sidestepping sorrow, the authors call the church to embody lament together — to create space where grief can be expressed, shared, and transformed in the presence of others. Healing begins where lament is welcomed.

Food for thought:

1. What comes to mind when you consider how your church community has typically navigated grief?
1. Reflect on what spaces you have felt safe to grieve in the presence of others. What was it about those spaces that led you to feel safe to grieve?
3. What sorrow or loss have you been holding inside that longs for expression?
4. Who accompanies you in your grief, and where do you long for more support?
5. Where have you sensed God's presence most near during difficult moments?

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Small Group Guides - WEEK THREE

March 8 - 14

Introductions: Say hello and share how you cope with a stressful situation.

Opening Prayer: Faithful God, you know our fears, our denials, and the burdens we carry within. Be near to us in anxiety and stress, and draw us toward wholeness of body, mind, and spirit. Make this community a sanctuary of compassion and listening, where your grace restores what feels fractured. Amen.

Bible Reading: John 18:12-27, Peter's Denial

Setting the Table: This week looks honestly at mental health — including trauma, anxiety, stress, and the unmet emotional needs within our congregations and society. The church is called not just to preach care, but to embody health and wholeness: creating practices and communities that attend to spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being.

Food for thought:

1. What is your relationship with your mental health? How has your relationship with your mental health supported or hindered your deepest longings?
2. In what ways has the Christian church hindered or supported your deepest longings and mental wellness?
3. What conditions are necessary to improve the relationship between mental wellness, the Christian church, and our deepest longings? How can the church become a sanctuary of healing for mental health?
4. Where do you experience anxiety or stress most acutely? What practices help you feel grounded in God's presence?
5. Who in your life needs compassion and listening right now? What is one step you can take today to nurture wholeness in yourself or others?

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Small Group Guides - WEEK FOUR

March 15 - 21

Introductions: Share your favorite thing about belonging to Holy Trinity.

Opening Prayer: God of welcome and justice, you call us into a community shaped by love, truth, and compassion. Where we have excluded, teach us to open the table wider. Where we have been unseen, help us to see one another clearly. Form us into a community where all can belong and hope can grow. Amen.

Bible Reading: John 18:28-40, Jesus and Pilate

Setting the Table: Community — genuine, attentive, loving community — is at the heart of this week. Explore how the church can become a place where people truly belong, not just gather. We are called to create spaces where all are welcomed at the table, differences are honored, and relationships are shaped by compassion and justice.

Food for thought:

1. In your own experience, what are the barriers to authentic community?
2. Why does community, grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, still matter today?
3. Where have you felt excluded or unseen? How have Christian communities contributed to those feelings?
4. What does it mean to you for the church to be a table where everyone is welcome? What qualities in Christian communities make this possible?
5. What steps could make your congregation more welcoming? How does love transform a community into a place of hope?

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Small Group Guides - WEEK FIVE

March 22 - 29

Introductions: Share your plans for Easter with your group.

Opening Prayer: God of the world and of the cross, you send us beyond familiar walls into the lives of our neighbors. Give us courage to follow Christ into places of justice, compassion, and service. Help us recognize the hope already growing in our community, and invite us to join in your work of love and healing. As we walk toward Holy Week, lead us in faithful action. Amen.

Bible Reading: John 19:1-16a, Jesus Condemned

Setting the Table: This week moves the church beyond its walls. It is a call to engage in the life of the world — in justice, neighborly compassion, and faithful action. The church is called to trust and accompany the broader world in the work God is already doing.

Food for thought:

1. How have you experienced God in the community?
2. What issues in your community seem to be most urgent? What do people in your community care most about? If you don't know what these things are, then what is your plan to learn more about what they may be?
3. How does the world around you show signs of hope?
4. How can Christ's love shape your interactions outside church spaces?
5. What risks of faithfulness feel most alive to you right now?

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday: Sunday, March 29, 9 am. *Brunch* at 10 am.

Maundy Thursday: Thursday, April 2, 7 pm

Good Friday: Friday, April 3, 7 pm

Easter Sunday: Sunday, April 5, 8:30 & 10:30 am.

Easter Egg Hunt at 10 am.



HOLY TRINITY
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